3/8/74

p. 8 okay to quote from letters

Ed. The Little Company of Mary
Calvary Nursing Home
Sudbury Hill
Die 3 Augusti Harrow-on-the-Hill
Middlesex
Post Xt. Nat.
1974

Dearest René

Many thanks for yr letter written on July 21 & received August 1st. — I am sorry for ~~my~~ delay in answering it. No letter from you could ever be a burden to me — be assured of that.

About this heavy weight Vinaver in the ring with Caxton. I thought we had sorted that business of the substitution of *jour de Pasques* by 'Sherthursdaye' as mentioned in the note to p.51 of ~~[illegible]~~ *The Anathemata*. written I suppose in 1949 or '50. At that time I did ask various blokes (who were supposed to know the French tongue) if they thought that ~~in Middle French~~ the Thursday [Feria V (in Coena Domini) of the Great Week] was, in Middle French, known as ~~[illegible]~~ as *jour de Pasques* and so ~~[illegible]~~ would be translated in *late* Middle English as 'Estir Daye' whereas Caxton gave it as 'Sherethursday' which seemed to us to-day as ~~[illegible]~~ very good & indeed ~~necessary~~ requiring emendation, but made sense ~~[illegible]~~ ~~[illegible]~~ as in full alignment with the familiar mass-prayer "Qui, pridie quam pateretur (accepit hostiam) ~~accipit~~ panem in Sanctus ac venerabiles manus suas etc."

As ~~the~~ ~~[illegible]~~ 'meal' expressed under the terms of ~~the~~ 'the holy ~~[illegible]~~ dish wherein I ate the lamb ~~[illegible]~~ on Sher-Thursday' (I can't find the exact passage now) was thought of as the actual Paschal meal as the Jewish Law required, ~~[illegible]~~ Sherethursday was the only possible day to fit the description "on the day before he suffered". So it seemed that Caxton's amendment of 'the French book' ~~[illegible]~~ should not have been described by Vinaver as a corrupt variant of *le jour de pasques*.

But as you say, one would ~~[illegible]~~ not at all like to cross swords with old Vinaver — he knows about all there is to know about this stuff & was, after all, concerned only with the ~~[illegible]~~ French text &

Once again not read through or shan't get person who takes my mail to the post. Any this is nothing is worth reading so when you feel like an extra fatigue of ~~nearly~~ [illegible] 10 pages of useless stuff, leave it.

any variation fr it by Caxton or for that matter, ~~[illegible]~~ in the Winchester M.S. Moreover as you point out in yr letter, he most probably took the French to mean 'the Day of the Passover'.

What you say ~~that~~ i Old English Easter daeg was used to mean both ~~Dominica Dominica~~ Easter Day and ~~the~~ The Thursday when our Lord at the lighted board, in supremae ~~[illegible]~~ nocte coenae recumbens cum fratribus made the Oblation of Himself that made him the Victim to be immolated on the morrow.

I was very interested that in modern French pâque means the Passover of the Jews but that pâques with a final S, means ~~the~~ Xtian Easter. That modern usage may give us a ~~So it~~ clue as to the Medieval & French ~~use of Pasques~~ & English use of ~~the~~ term Pasques as ~~[illegible]~~ meaning both the Thursday and/or ~~&~~ the Sunday.. The Frogs call Feria VI of the Great Week, Le Vendredi saint do they not? What do they ~~called~~ call Holy Saturday? (Sabbato Sancto de Vigilia paschali) When you say that in Old English Easterdaeg was used of the Supper & the Sunday, I take it you meant by 'Old English', Anglo-Saxon & not Middle English? I ask only because ~~[illegible]~~ very exact ~~scholars~~ scholars sometimes ~~[illegible]~~ use 'Old English' in a wider sense.* Here I ask because it has a bearing on this tricky matter. Someone a bit back asked me if I knew ~~why~~ we an English used the word Easter instead of some form of ~~pasque pasch~~ a word deriving fr Latin pasch fr Greek fr Hebrew as they do in French or Spanish or Italian or Welsh. I said I remember only the Bede the Venerable as far as I could remember said the English used Easter because among the Nordic peoples ~~then~~ there was a female cult-figure whose festival was kept round about the Vernal Equinox & when they received the Xtian faith & cult it was natural that as the time of year there existed this celebration of the ~~of~~ springing forth of the trees & ~~[illegible]~~ greenery this flowering should be equated with the Lent, passion death & resurrection of the Xtian belief & the name of the ~~goddess~~ goddess or cult figure.

* As I've put it, it must sound very impertinent ~~what~~ but it was only asked because I find it is so often used to cover both A.S. & Middle English in conversation I mean.

3

having been associated with the ~~festal~~ festival became retained by sheer custom. I think Bede says her name was Eostre or something similar. What I have long found surprising is the continuity of this term so that to-day over the whole English speaking world Easter remains the time of year that it did for Bede in Northumbria in the 8th cent.

But step outside the English speaking world & immediately some word derived fr Pascha is used.

Ask a wholly monoglot ~~Welshman~~ Welshman (if you could find one today) what 'Easter' ~~meant~~ meant & you be met by a bewildered expression. possibly a Frenchman who uses not Easter but le Pasques or even le Pâques might ring a bell for y Pasg derived directly fr the Latin pascha of the age in Britain when romanitas was becoming, along with the rest of the Western Imperium under the influence of The Xtian thing. I dont know German but I believe that in Germany and ~~the~~ other nordic ~~countries~~ countries the word for Easter is cognate with the English usage What surprizes me is that this O.E. word should have remained all through the centuries fr Bedes' date (8 cent.?) right on through the Middle Ages The affair of 1066 ~~only~~ alone would one would suppose, have caused a change or for fr the Norman Conquest until ~~[illegible]~~ the Lancastrian dynasty in the 15th Cent. Middle English was rapidly giving way to Anglo-French. The first documents of the House of Commons to be written in English were in Henry IV's reign.

I've still nothing to help over the Vinaver – Caxton thing – but it looks as if in the late 15th Century when Malory was writing ~~[illegible]~~ some form of Pasques would used in France & in England of ~~Easter~~ Easter time. But however that may be, I feel that Caxtons 'Sher Thursday' is much more clear ~~to~~ to us to day & presumably to those for whom he wrote. Especially as know we was

[illegible]

very much concerned with the then usage and says that he would enquire of, say, a ~~[illegible]~~ Canon of Westminster as how best to spell & pronounce some given word & then ask the same question of a stone mason or what not & receive a quite different answer. This placed him in the position of having to decide himself & as wooden type face was a very different matter from writing in ink on MSS He had a considerable hand in determining how our words are ~~[illegible]~~ spelt & pronounced. From that it looks as if he found 'Sherethursday' was more generally in use in late 15th Cent. English than some variant of Pasche or 'Holy Thursday' or 'Maundy Thursday.' I wonder when ~~Pascal~~ Paschal Candle ~~was~~ first ~~appeared~~ appeared in English, & ~~or 'Crouch mass' for the adoration of the Cross on [illegible]~~

I think, in the light of what you say that one can ~~[illegible]~~ only conclude that (in the late middle-ages especially) there were many variations used for 'Le jour de Pasques' & 'Estir'. Not much of an ~~[illegible]~~ answer ~~too~~ to the question you ask.

When I mentioned in *The Area* that I thought Caxton's Sherethursday was more clear than 'Estir day', I had no ~~notion~~ intention of disputing with Vinaver which would be absurd in me. But only that in that particular passage it seems to me that in English the change was an advantage, as it seemed very odd to speak of the Last Supper as ~~Easter~~ Easter Day. But I had no idea then that from what you say 'Easter Day' could mean in O.E. ~~[illegible]~~ either the Sunday or the Thursday.

There is another matter, though it does not affect this matter of medieval terms either French or English. But it is of interest.

Contd on sheet 5

In the middle ages & for long after then, & as far as I can make out before them (but of this I don't know) the 'supper' was equated with the actual Passover Meal as required by the Levitical code, whereas we ~~[illegible]~~ now know that it was ~~the~~ meal of unleaven bread & ~~[illegible]~~ a tasting of wine that had close association with the actual Day of the Passover. It was called the ~~[illegible]~~ azymes & it would appear that the Synoptic Gospels are not clear about this. Moreover in the O.T. (in Exodos I think,) ~~the~~ the azymes were eaten after the ~~[illegible]~~ Passover Festival, whereas in ~~[illegible]~~ N.T. times they were eaten before the actual Feast of the Passover, which had to be on the 14th day of the First Month ('March' as with the Romulean Calendar & that of Celtic calendars also) but as I mention in note based on Schürer's great work on the Jewish people on page 52 Note (1) of The Anathemata. ~~[illegible]~~ Schürer's ~~was~~ work was translated into English & the edition I used was late 1890. ~~But~~ and of course a hell of a lot of stuff has been gone into since then, but not in contradiction of Schürer (over this matter anyway) & I see that ~~[illegible]~~ 'The Jerusalem Bible' ~~says that~~ notes that the discrepancies in the Synoptic accounts could have various explanations and notes that among various groups of Jews the azymes were eaten on the Tuesday before the Passover Feast. Also that in the year AD.30 & AD 33 the actual Passover fell on a ~~Tuesday~~ Friday. So that there is a great uncertainty in determining both the most likely year and day of the Abendmahl & the Crucifixion. However I merely accept the tradition as it has come down to us by the Church. It is suggested that if the 'meal' ~~could have been on Tuesday~~. followed by the arrest by the olive press ~~[illegible]~~ that would give a more reasonable time for the taking of the Victim to the house of Annas, then to the official residence of Caiaphas the High priest for that year & then, ~~the~~ when it was morning, to the Procurator, after to Herod & back to the Procurator & his continued attempts to save the Victim, without avail, and eventually the Crucifixion at noon on Friday.

But it is difficult to believe that the

earliest Xtians should have made Thursday and not Tuesday, to be the Day of the Supper. But of course one is so ignorant of the available evidence that one can make no comment.

I have often thought that there was awfully little time between the evening of Thursday & the noonday darkness of Friday for all the crowded events, but as I thought of the whole tradition as having come down through the centuries in that pattern — a true mythos it did not greatly worry me or indeed worry me at all. It is thought by some that 'the Synoptics fitted into a few hours juridical processes that in historic fact required some days'.* — that sounds reasonable enough but still leaves the difficulty of the liturgical pattern accepted by the whole Church, East & West. It does not affect the truth of the Xtian mythos. But it does make one wonder precisely when & why Thursday & Friday were, so to say, chosen by the Church to show forth the Oblation & the Immolation.

*This is quoted from The Jerusalem Bible

~~St John~~ The Fourth Gospel ~~seems to indicate that~~ they say indicates that the Supper was on Friday evening & the Crucifixion on the Saturday so on the actual day of the Jewish Passover meal which was eaten in the evening of that day, hence the importance of the removal of the bodies from the crosses before the beginning of the Sabbath which was also that year the Day of the Passover, and the reason why the Caiaphas and the other Jewish priests could not go into the Procurator's residence, for that would defile them as it was the 'Preparation Day of the Pasch'.* This is from the notes in the Jerusalem Bible & they give them as various opinions only & leave the matter open.

Unsatisfactory, but at least they admit that there are many difficulties and contradictions that are not yet cleared up.

Lord! How horribly complex it all is.

'It is good of you to have written that thing for 'the Welshing' I hope they pay you properly.' William Cookson came yesterday & said the

In Matthew 27.62. also refers to the "Next day, the the preparation Day was over." Matthew was speaking of the ~~the evening~~ of the day when the Crucifixion & Burial had ~~took place~~ taken place, that is, Friday, so the next day would mean Saturday. But in a note to the The Jerusalem Bible reads Greek paraskeué (preparation) meaning Friday i.e. the day when preparation were made for the Sabbath. But in John's Gospel, in the Jerusalem Bible says that It is difficult not to suppose that in that particular year the Actual Passover meal took place on the evening of Friday & that our Lord's last Supper was on that day, whereas the Synoptics put on Thursday — but I can't I can't disentangle what is said.

7

~~He or~~
was able to get to the Mermaid Theatre ~~thing and thought~~
it was good & that you were splendid ~~and~~ natural
& said what you had to say without any notes.
He expressed some disappointment that they had used so little
of the recordings available of bits of my own readings.
I forget, did you get a copy of the *Agenda* with
a coloured reproduction on the cover of the Drystan ac Esyllt
watercolour?
When William C. said he was hoping to have it
in colour on the front of the book, I said, God! William
you know how appallingly difficult it is to make coloured
reproductions of my stuff – especially reduced in size requiring
for ~~A~~*Agenda* for a an 'imperial' sized original. He said
Well let's have a shot – I'll not use it until
the printers manage to get it up to the standard I think
possible & of course I'll bring the result for you to
decide before we ~~wait~~ use it. Well, when he brought me
a proof copy I confess I was astonished – of
course ~~[illegible]~~ its pretty different from
the original – too blue all over, but none the less
did give the feeling of the sea & the details came out
~~was astonishing~~ astonishingly better than I would hope
for. I notice that in all colour photographs I think
they call them 'transparencies' blue is the predominating
colour – sometimes to an unbelievable degree I wonder
why that is? Some one sent me some colour photographs
of the ~~room~~ gallery with my pictures hanging on the walls
in that recent exhibition in Wales, ~~[illegible]~~ Cardiff
& Aberystwyth ~~with~~ they looked as though they had
been dipped in blue solution. You would have thought
with all this modern tecnics they could do
better than that.
God knows how many letters etc I had
over the C.H. thing – from unexpected chaps
persons. The one I think I found containing
the most amusing came on a post.card in an
envelope I think was from Walter Shewring
indeed no one else but Walter could

no not
in an envelope
I've just
refound it!

managed it. It reads (dated York June 16'.)

Hail thou!
BY MERIT RAIS'D
TO THAT BAD EMINENCE.
Walter S.

'It sounds familiar but I cannot recall its author — as a somewhat Drydenesque ~~[illegible]~~ feeling or anyhow 17th century, in which case it is unlikely that I would know by whom for I'm not much versed in that period — only in bits & pieces. Do you recognize it_

I'm glad to hear the ~~New Blackfriars~~ the New Blackfriars ~~are~~ not wanting any cuts in your article.

~~[illegible]~~.

Yes, I agree it is a bore to write 'David ~~says~~ thinks so & so' — you can quote from any letters of mine when you feel you wish to. ~~—~~ I should appreciate having a look, as you suggest, of the parts you feel I should see, just in case, over some small matter, I had any objection — but I can't imagine I'd would in anything you wrote;

To say the truth I'm pretty uncertain of the meaning in grammar of what ~~constitut~~ constitutes a strong verb in contrast ~~to~~ a weak verb, & the definitions of strong and weak given in say The Shorter O.E.D dont help me. I mean I understand, ~~for example~~ the meaning of 'in the nominative case & in the feminine gender' ~~because~~ need not refer to the name of a girl because ~~the~~ in Grammar the term 'gender' ~~[illegible]~~ can be used of words that have no connection with 'male' or 'female' in the biological sense. (although they are in English) but such is my ignorance that while I understand that re 'gender' and 'case' & nominative, accusative, vocative etc, I dont really know the difference in grammar between 'weak' & 'strong' though I know that poets & others ~~so~~ speak so frequently of a 'weak' entry

~~gay in the [illegible]~~

as opposed to a 'strong' ending. Hopkins or any poet one cares to name use 'weak' & strong with ~~an~~ ~~obvious~~ obvious sense of making a clear distinction — but alas, never known with precision what the two words convey, which can be ~~a nuisance~~ as much of a nuisance as not being able to spell — could not write 'nuisance' without looking at the dictionary!

Sorry for this long, long letter..

I've heard no more from Harman, he thinks I told you how he came a bit back but only for a very short time & Sabina & her ~~husband~~ husband came in ~~[illegible]~~ car as they had some appointment & so He went with them. He wanted to know the details of dear Bernard's death, that had caused him the same sorrow as it had me. It was ~~happy~~ heavenly seeing him again even though the time was so brief.

Margaret wrote me a note of congratulation about the C.H. which I thought extremely kind as she was obviously still in much distress. I wrote back as soon as I could. Otherwise I have not attempted to answer these many many letters & telegrams.

~~[illegible]~~.

Not a very attractive world just now. I wish I could feel better, for I want to get on with that *Kensington Mass* a fragment of which was in the last issue of *Agenda*. (the one with the Trystan & Essyllt on cover)

Just had a jolly nice gift from ~~Dou~~ Douglas Woodruff — a really admirable book with superb illustrations — entitled *The Life & Times of Alfred the Great* by Douglas Woodruff. It is one of that series *The Kings & Queens of England* under the General editorship of Antonia Fraser published by Weidenfeld & Nicolson, price £2. 65 pence* in U.K. only. but really a superb production for that small price (as things go now) I have not of course read any of the text but the illustrations are magnificent, 16 in colour & 100 in black & white.

*less than the slim vol of 111 pages of The Sleeping Lord he Douglas W. sent it to me with a charming letter, as a congratulatory gift on my being given the C.H.

But I do think it was exceedingly kind of him. For after all, it is a good few years now that we last met and although we were always on good terms over the years, ~~we were not~~ I could claim to have been an intimate & close friend or at least not deserving of such a splendid gift ~~as~~ a mark of my being granted the C.H. by the queen. So I feel it very kind & courteous in him & warm hearted.

I am worried in various ways & had hoped that long before this I should have able to get about & be able to do something about my room at Monksdene for I constantly am hampered in for instance writing any kind of stuff for even a thing such as The Kensington Mass I need references of all sorts of diverse kinds that are among innumerable books & papers & personal stuff going back to my childhood. It could not be avoided and all kinds of solutions have naturally been considered in my mind but so far I have not been able to do more than let the matter bide. As the various alternatives seemed less to my liking – I suppose the central trouble is that one finds it difficult to bring, for various reasons, in what our America friends call 'hospitalization', & at the same get on with making work or trying to. But I must stop this stuff Heavens it is sheet 10 — but having written it won't tear it up now as I frequently do.

Much love to dear Joan I was so delighted to get her letter a bit back and still laugh when I think of citing the 'Put that stick down' repeated three times & receiving three the same respond. 'No, Sir.' I must have been what Lord Hailsham (was it) called 'bonkers'.

Bendith arnoch, René
much love David